U.S. Pulls H-Bomb Off Slope

P 1 x 3 inch.

PALOMARES, Spain, March 19 (UPI)—A missing American hydrogen bomb located at a depth of 2500 feet in the Mediterranean was dragged carefully today off a steep slope on the sea bottom to a more favorable recovery area. The bomb was expected to be brought to the surface by Sunday night.

An official U.S. announcement in Madrid said the dragging action will lessen the risk of having the bomb, with its parachute still attached, slip off "its present precarious position into much deeper water."

The bomb, missing since a B-52 bomber collided with its refueling plane Jan. 17, was found Wednesday about five miles offshore from Palomares by a naval task force headed by Rear Adm. William S. Guest, after a nine-week land and sea search.

The vessel expected to lift it out of the water is the USS Hoist, a salvage ship attached to the U.S. 6th Fleet.

The 22-foot two-man submersible Alvin and the 51-foot underwater research craft Aluminaut—both of which can be equipped with mechanical claws—were expected to secure a line to the bomb and the Hoist would then raise it.

Although there has been no official announcement that the object located Wednesday was the missing weapon, no one expressed doubt that it was the bomb.